

its most acute phase manifests itself in auto-erotic acts. Whilst, therefore, it is a good thing if people begin to pay somewhat less attention to the occurrence and to feel less distressed by it, it is nevertheless desirable that responsible educators and psychologists should realise not only that masturbation has psychological meaning, but what that meaning is—should, in fact, understand the real grounds for the educational policy they adopt.

For an understanding of the psychology of early masturbation we have to turn to the unconscious phantasies associated with it which are revealed in the psycho-analysis of both children and adults. The material I am able to quote here gives us very little hint of what these phantasies are. The boy mentioned on p. 147, who shouts and laughs in his bed and says, "I am laughing at ladies and babies", and "I can't help it, I must " is pretty certainly engaged in some sort of masturbatory activity, and gives us the barest hint of his sexual phantasies about ladies and babies.

In detail, masturbatory phantasies vary characteristically from individual to individual, but the essential content always has reference to the child's sexual longings for mother or father, as the case may be, and his aggressive intentions towards his rivals, the whole being worked out by the omnipotent magical act of achieving sexual satisfaction in his own person. In most cases, this self-induced satisfaction is sought largely as a reassurance against the fear of having the genital attacked and removed by vengeful parents, and against the dread of its being bad, dirty and destructive.¹ So long as the sensation of pleasure can be repeated and

¹ I might instance in this connection the dream of an adult man patient who had been, as a boy, a compulsive

masturbator, and suffered severely under the open threats of castration by his father. During his analysis there were periods when the need to masturbate became very strong again. Associated with one of these periods was a dream, in which he found himself in the presence of a certain young woman, he himself wearing only an undervest. He raised the vest to show his genital, saying to her, "There is nothing the matter with it, is there?" and she replied, "No, there is nothing the matter, except that it is too hot." From the whole context, and many earlier associations, it was clear the dream thus expressed not only the intense need for reassurance which is usually involved in the exposure of the genitals—as I indicated in the last section of the material—and which is also a strong factor in masturbation, but also the particular nature of one dread connected with the genital, namely, the dread that it is nothing but an instrument for the expulsion of hot, burning urine, and therefore dangerous and destructive.